

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentlewoman's courtesy in permitting me to speak on this; and I, too, rise in support of the amendment. I think it exemplifies the type of leadership we have had on our committee. I appreciate the chairman of the Committee on International Relations bringing it forward.

Doug Bereuter, I mentioned earlier on the floor during a special order this morning, what a difference he has made for me and all who serve with him. This identifies *Doug* as being a legislator, with his fingerprints on a wide variety of legislation.

I am pleased that we have had items brought forward that enshrine his name on legislation and on programs. I hope that we will be mindful of the many other contributions that he has made that few know about unless they had the pleasure of serving with him and watching him in action. I think it is a testimony to his insight, his patience and his hard work that he has been able to inspire this confidence on both sides of the aisle.

I am pleased that we have this as an additional expression of our support as he moves forward into a new career.

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I will not take the full 5 minutes, in the spirit of trying to move this forward, but I am concerned about the sense of urgency of the problem dealing with sudden oak death. I appreciate my colleagues, the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. *Hooley*) and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. *Wu*), highlighting the problem as it relates to our State.

The nursery industry is an important part of our agricultural base. Just 1 percent of Oregon farm land devoted to the nursery industry produces 20 percent of total crop value.

This is not just an Oregon problem. We are involved with massive amounts of transfer of plant material around the country, and if we are not able to move quickly to deal with sudden oak death, we risk not just crippling the nursery business in Oregon but it is going to have consequences for people throughout the country as this disease makes its way through the

system.

I hope that we would in fact approve this amendment. It is a modest amount of money to make a difference to a \$14 billion national industry and prevent much more serious steps that will need to be taken in the future.

So, with due respect to the chair of the subcommittee, I would hope that my colleagues would approve the amendment to exercise the foresight to avoid a problem in our State, in our region, in the West to avoid becoming truly a national disaster.

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I am happy to expedite this issue. I rise to offer this amendment in collaboration with my colleague, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. *Tancredo*), to provide an additional \$1.2 million to improve the enforcement of Federal animal fighting laws. This is a perennial problem that the Federal Government has a critical role to solve.

Last year, the House passed an amendment to increase funding by \$800,000, and I am appreciative for the approval by the body of that legislation and appreciate the growing support to combat these dangerous activities that threaten the health and well-being of both humans and animals and threaten the prosperity of our agricultural industry.

We have had earlier this year over 130 representatives and 47 members of the other body requesting this \$1.2 million increase for animal fighting enforcement in letters to the Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies. This broad bipartisan support reflects our constituents' concern for meaningful enforcement of the Federal animal law, but, despite this broad bipartisan support, there are no additional funds designated within the account specifically for this task.

This amendment would provide \$1.2 million for the Office of Inspector General, the chief law enforcement arm of the USDA, to focus on animal fighting cases, working closely with State

and local enforcement personnel to complement their efforts.

This funding does not take money away from any other programs. It simply removes funds from the Office of Inspector General, places them back into the same account to designate the \$1.2 million for enforcement of animal fighting laws.

Now, while the Inspector General did receive an increase in funding this year, it was to compensate for salary and cost increases and was not specifically providing funding for the enforcement of animal fighting.

Even though dog fighting is banned in 50 States and cockfighting is banned in 48, the Federal Government, as I mentioned earlier, must be involved because participants in animal fights often come together from several States at a time and animals are routinely moved across State lines.

Make no mistake, this is not some innocent pastime. Dogfighting and cockfighting are barbaric activities in which animals are given drugs to make them hyperaggressive, drugs to clot their blood more quickly so they can keep fighting longer. They are forced by their handlers to keep fighting even after they have suffered grievous injuries such as pierced lungs and gouged eyes. Dogfights and cockfights do not only involve deplorable animal abuse but they are inevitably, without question, involved with illegal gambling, often drug traffic and violence to people.

It is well-documented that animal fighters often bring their children to these spectacles, sending a terrible message to them about animal cruelty and violence and subjecting them to the aforementioned illegal activities.

Some dogfighters even steal pets to use as bait for training their dogs. Some abandon the fighting animals, leaving them to roam neighborhoods and wreak havoc. Any dog bred and trained to fight poses a public safety risk, and there have been numerous tragic examples, many involving children.

Animal fighting also poses a severe threat to the stability of our Nation's agricultural economy. This is something we brought to the floor in the past and I feel has not been given the attention that it needs.

Secretary of Agriculture Veneman indicated in a letter from January that cockfighting has been implicated in the introduction and spread of exotic Newcastle Disease in California in years 2002 and 2003 which cost United States taxpayers nearly \$200 million to eradicate and cost the United States poultry industry many millions more in lost export markets.

"We believe," the Secretary says, "that tougher penalties and prosecution will help deter illegal movement of birds as well as the inhumane practice of cockfighting itself."

It has also been implicated in the deaths of at least two children in Asia this year who were exposed through cockfighting activities to bird flu. This is why the National Chicken Council, which represents 95 percent of U.S. poultry producers and processors, has stated that they are "concerned that the nationwide traffic in game birds creates a continuing hazard for the dissemination of animal diseases."

Surely, Mr. Chairman, spending this \$1.2 million to crack down on illegal animal fighting is a wise investment to prevent the spread of costly future diseases. Animal fighting is no longer simply an animal welfare issue, although it certainly is that. It is an epidemic that costs taxpayers millions of dollars. It threatens our food supply and destroys the hard work of American farmers, promoting illegal gambling and drug activities and putting the public at risk.

I strongly urge my colleagues to vote in support of this amendment.

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Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the balance of my time, and let me conclude by saying that I appreciate the expressions of interest and concern on the part of my friend, the distinguished Chair of the subcommittee. The point is, after having worked on this issue now for over 3 years

in this Congress, I find that this is extraordinarily elusive. And the reason it is elusive, and the reason that animal fighting continues in this country to be a problem, is because Congress does not step forward to stop it.

The gentleman mentioned the problem, that it is a misdemeanor. So people do not want to deal with enforcement. That was a tactical decision that was made by the people who apologize for this interest. There are, make no mistake about it, lobbyists here for illegal game-fighting birds, for example, who ply their trade here behind closed doors in Congress, and who have successfully fought to keep the criminal provisions as low as they can so that they can use the excuse, when the issue comes forward, well, we really cannot enforce it because the penalty provisions are not strong enough.

It is time for us to say enough to illegal animal fighting for dogs and game birds. My distinguished friend from Ohio points out that there are opportunities to recover money if we were aggressive about it and to stop using the excuse that because we, Congress, refuse to increase the penalties, well, then, we are not going to mess with it. I would strongly suggest that we stop hiding behind this smoke screen and stop serving as an apologist for a despicable industry.

I look forward to working with my friend to increase the penalties. But in the meantime, approve this amendment and send a signal that we want what we have to be enforced.